

## U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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# News Release



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### **U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE WILL NOT CONDUCT IN-DEPTH REVIEW TO CONSIDER LISTING COLUMBIAN SHARP-TAILED GROUSE**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reviewed a petition to list the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse (*Tympanuchus phasianellus columbianus*), a ground-nesting bird, under the Endangered Species Act and concluded the petition does not present substantial information indicating listing as a threatened or endangered species may be warranted. The negative petition finding was published in today's *Federal Register*.

The Service made this determination in response to a petition received in October 2004 from Forest Guardians, American Lands Alliance, Biodiversity Conservation Alliance, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Native Ecosystems, The Larch Company, Northwest Ecosystem Alliance, Oregon Natural Desert Association, and Western Watersheds Project. Under the Act, the Service is required to review the petition in a process known as a 90-day finding to decide whether it contains substantial scientific information that may warrant listing of the species.

“Despite the negative finding announced today, the Service is continuing to collect information with our partner agencies and is engaged in conservation efforts for the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse,” said Susan Martin, Supervisor of the Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office. “Reintroduction efforts are underway and some states have acquired property to be used for management of the species.”

Roughly 95 percent of all Columbian sharp-tailed grouse inhabit northwestern Colorado/south-central Wyoming, southeastern Idaho/northern Utah, and central British Columbia. The available information indicates that these three populations are relatively secure and will likely remain stable or increase in abundance over the next several decades. Several other populations are likely to remain stable under current management scenarios, including the Nespelem population in Washington, the west-central Idaho population, and the south-central Idaho/northern Nevada population.

The Columbian sharp-tailed grouse is one of seven recognized subspecies of sharp-tailed grouse that have been described in North America. The sharp-tailed grouse is a large,

brownish-gray, ground-nesting bird with many small buff and black markings, a white belly, and a long, mostly white, wedge-shaped tail. Compared to the other subspecies, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse are the smallest, and have darker gray plumage, more pronounced spotting on the throat, and narrower markings on the underside.

The Service will continue to solicit and review new information on conservation measures for the subspecies and the status of its discrete geographic populations. The Service is primarily interested in new information concerning population status and trends, extent of fragmentation and isolation of population segments, significance of discrete population segments, potential threats, and ongoing conservation measures that may be important to the conservation of the Columbia sharp-tailed grouse.

A copy of the finding on the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse is available on the Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/easternwashington>, or by contacting Tom Buckley at the Upper Columbia Fish and Wildlife Office at 11103 E. Montgomery Drive, Spokane Valley, Washington 99206.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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